

Frequently Asked Questions about Ordering Books

Q: Where do all the books come from?

A: The local program coordinator, with the assistance of the book selection committee, is responsible for ordering all books. These books may only be ordered from RIF-approved suppliers, which are listed in the Book Supplier Profile.

Q: How many books should we offer?

A: A school-year project must give at least three books through three distributions. The number of books ordered is based on the number of children in the program. At each distribution, the number of books offered should be equivalent to the number of children plus a 10% cushion.

For example, if you serve 300 children, you should offer at least 330 books. This 10% cushion means that when the last child selects a book, s/he has a genuine choice and is not forced to choose the last book remaining.

Q: Who actually chooses the books for our program?

A: Each RIF program must have a book selection committee of at least three people. Committee members can include teachers, parents, librarians, and even students. The book committee is responsible for choosing and ordering books for the program.

During distributions, program volunteers may wish to take note of children's reactions to the books being offered. These notes can be helpful in determining favorite authors and themes and can influence the next round of book ordering.

Q: What kinds of books are best?

A: Provide a wide variety at each distribution books that cover different genres, interest areas, and age and reading levels. Also try hard to make your selections reflect the values and diversity of your community.

Q: Is there more to a book distribution than just handing out books?

A: Definitely. Because the goal is to reinforce the desire to read, you should conduct motivational activities that tie in with each book distribution, match the youngsters' interests, and suit the community's resources.

Q: Are there any restrictions on what children can choose?

A: One of RIF's guidelines requires that children be able to choose books free of adult interference. Children who are absent during a distribution should also have the option of free choice; teachers or other students may not select for the absent child.

RIF recommends that the book selection committee be sensitive to community standards regarding appropriate book content when ordering books.

Children ages newborn to three may have a parent or guardian select books for them.

Q: When will RIF send my books?

A: All RIF programs must order their books directly from a RIF-approved book supplier. RIF publishes a list of approved book suppliers, called the Book Supplier Profile, each year. A copy of the profile is included in your approval packet each year.

Many book suppliers provide RIF-specific catalogs; you need to contact suppliers directly to receive the catalogs initially. Your RIF program should decide which books to order through a selection committee, composed of at least three people who represent program staff, parents, and other members of your community. When ordering, make sure you allow ample time (usually six to eight weeks) for shipment of the books.

When you receive your books, you should also receive an itemized invoice from the supplier. The book payment process begins after you receive your books.

Please contact your program specialist if you need an extra copy of the Book Supplier Profile.

Q: How can I get a local book supplier into RIF's book supplier catalogue?

A: If you would like to add a supplier to the Book Supplier Profile, contact RIF's publisher liaison and request that the company be sent a book supplier application. Or you can direct the book supplier to contact RIF.

If, after viewing the book supplier's application, sample titles, and catalogs, RIF determines that it meets requirements, a contract will be offered to the company. After the contract is signed and countersigned by RIF, the book supplier is added to the Book Supplier Profile and program coordinators may begin placing orders.

If the supplier is added by the request of a RIF coordinator, that coordinator will be contacted by the publisher liaison after an agreement is finalized.

The approval process and contracting takes about six weeks.

How can we get RIF book suppliers to address special needs books?

The index in the back of the Book Supplier Profile is a resource for finding suppliers who offer bilingual books, books in Braille, board books, and other special needs titles.

Ask your program specialist for suggestions on how to find books to meet your specific needs. Your program specialist will then relay this information to the publisher liaison, who is in contact with the RIF book suppliers.

As trends develop within the RIF community, the book suppliers will be informed, then they can consider publishing new titles in these areas or highlight those titles already available.

Q: What do we do when we have spent all of our federal allocation and would like to order more books?

A: RIF encourages local programs to use additional local funds to purchase books. These funds may provide additional books for the children or supplement the federal and local matching shares.

RIF programs are budgeted at a level that should be sufficient to provide the required number of books to every child in the program (three in a standard or school-year program, two in a short-term RIF program, and five in an expanded RIF program). If your program consistently has difficulty purchasing enough books, you should contact your program specialist to discuss whether you are eligible for a budget increase.

Some programs want to distribute extra books to the children. Many programs also choose to buy higher-cost books than their RIF federal allocation permits. In both cases, the local programs must raise additional funds to supplement the budget provided by their federal allocation.

When ordering books, coordinators and book selection committees should keep in mind how many books they need to purchase and how much money they have to spend. RIF cannot provide funds to cover added books or books outside of budget allowances.

Q: What do I do with extra books sent by publishers?

A: Many publishers ship "bonus books" to programs placing large orders. If these books are appropriate for the children served, they can be given out at a RIF distribution.

If the books are not appropriate for whatever reason (e.g., wrong age group) you have two different options: you may either return them to the publisher with an explanation and request appropriate substitutes, or you may donate them to another RIF program in your area. Your program specialist can help you get in contact with other local RIF programs.